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# IMAGINING KINGS: FROM PERSIA TO ROME

## (A) ROYAL IMAGES: INTRODUCTION

Both in stature and in beauty he displayed the dignity of a hero, so that even those strangers who had come from a distance, when they beheld his comeliness arrayed in royal splendour, marvelled at him and followed him as he went abroad in order to gaze at him. Furthermore, he was haughty in spirit and proud and looked down not only upon common men but also upon those of royal estate... (Diodorus Siculus 20.92.3-4 on Demetrius Poliorcetes<sup>1</sup>)

Riding high in his chariot, Darius cut a conspicuous figure, at once providing great incentive to his men to protect him, and to his enemies to attack him. (Q. Curtius Rufus 3.11.7 on Darius III at the battle of Issus<sup>2</sup>)

Where [the Persians] observed Alexander himself – he was unmistakable, from the splendour of his equipment and the enthusiasm of the men in attendance round him – aiming at their left, they massed their cavalry squadrons on the bank there. (Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.14.4 on Alexander the Great at the battle of the River Granicus)

For no part of the earth lacks the presence of your majesties, even when you yourselves seem to be absent. (*Panegyrici Latini* 11(3) 13.5 on the Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian<sup>3</sup>)

Visibility lies at the heart of power. The ability to create and manipulate images is itself an indication of power and (arguably) a means to accumulate greater power. To an age familiar with rituals such as the State of the Union Address and the State Opening of Parliament, and with image-creators and manipulators as diverse as Leni Riefenstahl and Sergei Eisenstein, or Joe Klein and Alastair Campbell, this is no doubt trite history and trite sociology. Nevertheless, the precise relationship between images and power continues to be the subject of lively debate within diverse fields in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>4</sup> Our aim in this book is to explore how this relationship was played out in the interconnected societies of the ancient Mediterranean and western Asia, that part of the human experience still often known in Western universities (perhaps unhappily) as the

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<sup>1</sup> Translations are taken from the relevant edition of the Loeb Classical Library unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Translation: Yardley 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Translation: Nixon/Rodgers 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Wolf 1999, 21-67 usefully sets out the debate, as does Freedberg 1989, 1-26; 429-40, from an art-historical point of view. Thompson 1990, 28-73 discusses ideology and representation. Interesting discussion and modern parallels can be found in Ellenius 1998. Amongst the vast amount of literature on aspects of the ancient world, we will only mention the seminal works by Ando 2000; Bulloch 1993; Elsner 1995; Hölscher 1987 (cf. Hölscher 2000), Smith 1988; Stewart 1993 and Zanker 1987.

'Ancient World'. Our focus will be on certain kinds of state; those ruled by monarchs.

The monarch, of course, stands in a unique position when it comes to presenting the image of 'state-power'. He/she in important senses *is* the state; thus the monarch's physical presence or image represents the state. This fact, inevitably, may be an advantage or a disadvantage. The 'royal splendour' and beauty of Demetrius, in the first epigraph above, may draw even strangers to follow him, and may thus serve as both an indication and a cause of the well-being of his kingdom (the image of Demetrius is further analysed by Thonemann). Image here both represents power and enhances it.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, a sickly monarch may imply to an observer a sickly polity; hence, no doubt, the readiness of monarchs in diverse societies to attempt to appear healthier than they are. This is exemplified most eloquently by Ryszard Kapuściński, whose *The Emperor: The Downfall of an Autocrat* presents a brilliant portrayal of the last days of Haile Selassie, as seen by his servants.

The emperor slept in a roomy bed made of light walnut. He was so slight and frail that you couldn't see him – he was lost among the sheets. In old age, he became even smaller. He weighed fifty kilograms. He ate less and less, and he never drank alcohol. His knees stiffened up, and when he was alone he dragged his feet, swaying from side to side as if on stilts. But when he knew that someone was watching him, he forced a certain elasticity into his muscles, with great effort, so that he moved with dignity and his imperial silhouette remained ramrod-straight. Each step was a struggle between shuffling and dignity, between leaning and the vertical line. His Majesty never forgot about this infirmity of his old age, which he did not want to reveal lest it weaken the prestige and solemnity of the King of Kings (Kapuściński 1983, 6).

It might be objected at this point that, in ranging from the Hellenistic world to twentieth-century Ethiopia and from ancient Persian kings to modern American presidents, we are guilty of that most seductive crime of the historian, anachronism, or specifically presentism. To this our response is brief. Any comparative study of the ancient world must steer a course round two fallacies.<sup>6</sup> The first is the unthinking application of modern critical terms and modern parallels to very different kinds of society. It hardly needs to be stated explicitly that the past is a 'foreign country', where things are done differently. Yet the second fallacy is to consider ancient societies as solely comprehensible in the terms and structures that they themselves use. Analyses which purport to adopt the latter approach rigorously cannot be taken entirely seriously – after all, if it were absolutely true, then alien cultures would be hermetically sealed structures, and the whole notion of interpreting them would be a delusive waste of time. We

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan* I.10: 'Reputation of Power is Power; because it draweth with it adhaerence of those that need protection'.

<sup>6</sup> Discussed helpfully (in the context of political terminology) by Davies 1994, 56. See also (amongst others) Hopkins 1978, ix-x.

are firmly convinced that this is not the case. Of course, every statement made by a historian is an act of translation and interpretation. To pretend otherwise is disingenuous. Our view, confirmed by our experiences in the seminar series upon which this volume is based, is that engaging with parallels from many cultures is an effective way of unpacking the structures and beliefs of the ancient Persian, Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Even a 'failed parallel', which looks apposite at first sight and then turns out to involve very different social structures, can be instructive. Ultimately, the Athenian drive to establish democracies wherever they could in the fifth century BC is quite different from the ostensibly similar drive by the contemporary USA to engineer democratic 'regime change' across the globe. But the differences may be instructive in themselves. Thus, proceeding with care, the articles in this volume deploy parallels from both the modern world and other cultures. Some may be thought more valid or fruitful than others, but as Bradley remarks, 'Distorted vision may be imperfect vision, but it is preferable to no vision at all'.<sup>7</sup>

In societies both ancient and modern, the sheer physicality of the monarch assures monarchies the kind of immediate public visual impact that other kinds of polity struggle to achieve. It is no coincidence that the age of television, broadcasting images into every citizen's home, should have been accompanied by a perceived (and perhaps real) shift in the locus of power in many Western democracies, from the 'collective' government to the 'presidential' or quasi-monarchical leader. As Walzer remarks: 'The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen.'<sup>8</sup> The goal of personification is more readily achieved in states with a ready-made person to hand; that of the monarch. Fröschl, in a suggestive article, distinguishes the royal image from the public images of other kinds of state (e.g. republics) in Kantian terms.<sup>9</sup> Kant distinguishes between 'schematic' images (where we know the corresponding image from experience) and 'symbolic' images (where no visual image corresponds directly to the idea). A monarchic state, we may argue, can be visualised very easily in 'schematic' terms through the figure of the ruler. A republic, by contrast, must be visualised in symbolic or abstract terms, whether through the Constitution, the Grundgesetz, Marianne, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, the she-wolf suckling twins, the classical Athenian owl or otherwise.<sup>10</sup> In terms of visualising power, the monarch has a dramatic head-start.

Of course, the royal image too may take on elements of the symbolic, and indeed often does. Monarchical attributes and accoutrements, 'status-symbols' may evolve and become fossilised in culturally specific contexts; crowns,

<sup>7</sup> Bradley 1992, 134. Cf. Burke 1992, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Walzer 1967, 194.

<sup>9</sup> Fröschl 1998, 262.

<sup>10</sup> The same seems to apply to a constitutional monarchy. Note the symbolic importance of (e.g.) Britannia with her trident, Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights of 1688, the Great Reform Act of 1832 and, most recently, the Human Rights Act 1998 in British political ideology.

sceptres, orbs, thrones, while no doubt originally ‘iconographic’ in implication, may become effectively ‘dead metaphors’, unthinkingly read as no more than symbols of kingship.<sup>11</sup> A series of veritable ‘symbolic economies’ of kingship is readily observable in the societies studied in this volume. An obvious context for the visualisation of monarchical power is explicitly provided by ‘royal rituals’. Examples would include coronations, royal marriages and funerals, as well as general court ceremonial, which may be more or less ‘public’.<sup>12</sup> However, these explicitly, even self-consciously ‘ritual’ contexts are not the only, or even necessarily the most important ones for visualising royal power. The daily business of monarchs, interacting with subjects or rivals in war or in administration, provides a permanent stage for the presentation and reception of royal images.

The most powerful effects, one might suggest, are created by the actual physical presence of the monarch. Let us take the example of warfare. As our second and third epigraphs above suggest, the visibility of kings on the battlefield, here Darius III of Persia and his conqueror, Alexander the Great, is considered vital to the success of their armies. Not only does the king symbolise the reasons for fighting, he creates the environment for success. Or for failure; in Alexander’s great victory at Issus, we are told, the Persian collapse was precipitated by the flight of Darius: (Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.11.2) ‘the Persians did not give way till they realised that Darius had fled and till their mercenaries were cut off...’ The significance attached to the monarch’s physical presence in battle of course becomes a *topos*. Thus, notoriously, Hitler refused to leave the Führerbunker in Berlin at the end of April 1945 in the face of all entreaties to evacuate.<sup>13</sup> As Trevor-Roper put it:

[Hitler] regarded himself, it seems, as a kind of palladium, a totem whose presence rendered any citadel impregnable, so long as he stayed. “If I leave East Prussia,” he had told Keitel at Rastenburg, “then East Prussia will fall; if I stay, it will be held.” Keitel had persuaded him to leave East Prussia, and East Prussia had duly fallen; but he did not intend to leave Berlin, and Berlin therefore could not fall. So he deluded himself as he held out, in an ever-contracting pocket of the city...

Comparable are the circumstances surrounding the accession of the young Seleucid king Antiochus III in 223 BC. Faced with the revolt of his eastern provinces under the pretender Molon, Antiochus was advised by his general Epigenes:

It was of the first importance ... that the king should proceed to the spot and be present at the actual theatre of events; for thus either Molon would not venture to disturb the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Nieto Soria 1998, 107-17; Chartier 1985, 497-501.

<sup>12</sup> See in general Cannadine / Price 1987. On coronations, see Chrościcki 1998. Sabatier 1998, 218-9 contains striking details on the ‘public’ nature of court ritual at Versailles under Louis XIV. Cf. Duindam 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Trevor-Roper 1995, 143 (compare 105-6); Kershaw 2000, 799-811. See now also Fest 2004, 62-69.

peace, once the king presented himself before the eyes of the people with an adequate force, or if in spite of this he ventured to persist in his project, he would be very soon seized upon by the populace and delivered up to the king. (Polybius 5.41.7-9)

In both cases, the physical presence of the ruler is believed to be of the essence (though clearly ‘adequate forces’ are also a necessary requirement). Sometimes the belief is even correct. Hitler was wrong. He stayed, and Berlin fell anyway. Epigenes’ analysis, by contrast, proved entirely accurate. When Molon’s army encountered Antiochus in Mesopotamia, ‘the left wing, as soon as they closed and came in sight of the king, went over to the enemy, upon which Molon’s whole force lost heart...’ (Polybius 5.54.1-2). Molon committed suicide.

The battlefield is an obvious locus for royal visibility, though the risk to the monarch of being killed in battle might outweigh the advantages gained from his presence. Thus no British king has commanded his army on the field of battle since George II at the battle of Dettingen in 1743. Though George VI famously expressed the wish to accompany the British army on the Normandy beaches on D-Day, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, his anxious advisers forcefully vetoed this idea.<sup>14</sup> However, the importance of the monarch’s physical presence extends far beyond the battlefield into the everyday exertion of administrative and judicial power within a kingdom. An excellent example is provided by Achaemenid Persia; as recent scholarship has recognised, the Persian court was extremely mobile, shifting between different capitals in Persis, Babylonia and Media in accordance with the changing of the seasons. By this means, according to Briant, the Great King, ‘normally so far away, as it were visited his subjects’, thus ‘remedying the immensity of the empire’.<sup>15</sup> Royal power could be made immediate, physical, visible to the kings’ subjects. To achieve this, the Persian king was required to be effectively ‘nomadic’. The same ‘royal nomadism’ can be seen, we would argue, in Seleucid and Parthian royal practice. It is most spectacularly apparent in the case of Rome. Roman emperors might be mobile primarily on military campaigns (like Trajan), or for more civic purposes (like Hadrian); but at any rate the successful emperor did and was expected to *move*, to tour the provinces and fight, give justice or make administrative decisions in person. Hence, of course, comes that *topos* of historical narratives from the principate, the embassy in hot pursuit of a moving emperor.<sup>16</sup> The emperor’s mobility, of course, was in a sense merely the re-enactment on the grand scale of the movement of the Roman provincial governor within his province. As the correspondence of the likes of Cicero (governor of Cilicia in 51-50 BC) and Pliny (Bithynia-Pontus, AD 111-113)

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Bradford 2002, 474-6. Churchill, too, was keen to be in the van of the liberating army; both king and prime minister were reluctantly persuaded to restrain their martial zeal until a bridgehead had been established.

<sup>15</sup> Briant 1988, esp. at 256, 270, citing Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.6.17 (α μὴχάνημα πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ἀρχῆς).

<sup>16</sup> Strabo 17.1.54 C821; Dio, 68.24-5. Cf. *Dig.* 50.7.9.1; Dio 59.6.3, with Plutarch, *Moralia* 179C-D and Plutarch, *Demetrius* 42.7. Millar 1992, 38-9, 363-8; Millar 2000a, 366-8.

shows, the governor would move from city to city discharging administrative and judicial functions, in this respect as in so many others acting as a 'microcosmic monarch' in his own territories.<sup>17</sup> Examples of the same phenomenon could be multiplied from other societies; the royal progresses of English monarchs, for example, or the assize system, by which English judges, as deputies for the king, travelled round the major towns of the kingdom hearing cases and dispensing justice in person. The assizes, Medieval in origin, only finally ceased in 1971.<sup>18</sup>

Our focus so far has been on royal visibility in a passive sense. Clearly, it is highly important to be seen. One must not forget, however, that 'sight-power' can take on an active sense too. A crucial function of royal presence is not just to be seen, but also to see; to observe and interact with one's subjects. The 'king-as-observer', whether overt, through such mechanisms as the royal audience, or covert, through disguises or informers, is a theme explored further in this volume (Allen, Hekster).

Actual physical presence is often the ideal means by which a king may assert his power. Of course, in some societies it is the absence or invisibility of the monarch which is a defining feature of his relations with his subjects; Chinese emperors in the Forbidden City, or Ottoman sultans in the Topkapı Palace would be obvious examples. In such cases, the palace complexes themselves might well serve the function of making forceful manifestations of state power on behalf of the unseen monarch; but we will leave aside for now the situations where positive advantage is believed to accrue from such 'visible invisibility' (further explored by Hekster). It is readily understood that the monarch cannot be everywhere at once – in spite of the protestations of the Panegyrist in our fourth epigraph. Consequently, one must also take note of 'surrogates' for the royal presence. These could be deputies, like the Roman provincial governor or the English assizes judge, but also icons or symbols. The creation of the 'royal image' must be studied through these symbolic surrogates, whether they take the form of sculpture (in relief or in the round) or coin-portraits (a constant medium of royal or quasi-royal representation from Persia to Rome and beyond). Further, monarchs can achieve 'documentary presence' by means of royal letters or ordinances, which can be read out in the public places of the recipient community, or published more permanently on stone or bronze.

Surrogates can end up being closely assimilated to the original. Statues of the Roman emperors were thought to 'provide the protection and justice which ideally the emperor would himself dispense – if only he were present and knew the facts'.<sup>19</sup> Statues of the emperors could be also used to claim asylum.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, St.

<sup>17</sup> On mobile emperors and mobile governors, see Millar 1992, 28-53; Marshall 1966, 231; Slootjes 2003.

<sup>18</sup> On royal progress: Hopkins 1978, 218-9; Geertz 1977, using examples as diverse as Elizabethan London, fourteenth-century Java, nineteenth-century Morocco and the 1972 US presidential campaign. On the English assizes system: Baker 2002, 17; 20-22.

<sup>19</sup> Hopkins 1978, 221.

Basil explicitly criticises the idea that there was a direct bond between the emperor and his statues:

The imperial image, too, is called the emperor; and yet there are not two emperors (ὅτι βασιλεὺς λέγεται καὶ ἡ τοῦ βασιλεῶς εἰκών, καὶ οὐ δύο βασιλεῖς): neither is the power cut asunder nor the glory divided. And as the authority which holds sway over us is one, so the glorification we address to it is one and not many, since the honour shown to the image is transmitted to its model (δίοτι ἡ τῆς Εἰκόνης τιμὴ ἐπὶ Πρωτότυπον).<sup>21</sup>

The centrality of the emperor's statue to subjects' conception of the Roman state is continuously manifest. Likewise, the first target of rioters or rebels would often be the very same statue of the emperor, which as the public apparition of a despised regime might be torn to the ground and smashed.<sup>22</sup> This close association between rulers and their representations is a characteristic of many societies. Indeed, damaging a ruler's image remains a vivid and effective way to illustrate discontent, as the decapitation of an eight-foot-tall marble statue of Margaret Thatcher at the Guildhall Art Gallery in July 2002 reminded us.<sup>23</sup>

As a mechanism of control or a means of projecting power, images can only substitute for real physical presence up to a point. Clearly, in the face of insurrection, the presence of a real monarch with an actual army is the last guarantee or 'longstop' of state control. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the value of 'surrogate images', whether portraits or written royal commands and grants, as a flexible tool of control. As Smith has remarked, on the subject of Hellenistic royal portraits: '[d]ynasts doubtless tried to project in life the same image as we see in the portraits; the main difference is that portraits do it better.'<sup>24</sup> A king may be idle, enfeebled with age, physically incapacitated or mad; none of this need be apparent to his subjects from an idealised portrait or a charter carefully drafted by a secretary. What must always be remembered, though, is the enormous diversity of royal images and symbols. Generalisation should only be used cautiously. Statues, coins and letters from different areas and issued by different rulers are all examples of royal images, and all may help in shaping our understanding of the ideology of particular monarchs in the ancient world. It would be wholly misleading, however, if we did not explore each artefact in its

<sup>20</sup> Gaius, *Inst.* 1.53; *Dig* [Ulpian], 21.1.19,1; *Cod. Theod.* 9.44.1. On asylum at imperial statues, especially for slaves; Pliny, *Epist.* 10.74, 1; Price 1984, 192; Pekáry 1985, 130.

<sup>21</sup> St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sanctu* 18.45. Discussed by Price 1984, 203.

<sup>22</sup> Pliny, *Panegyric*, 52.4. Cf. Gregory 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Freedberg 1989, 407-28. Toppling statues remains a potent symbol for regime change, as the fate of statues of Communist leaders (especially Stalin, Dzherzhinsky) in the former Soviet Union, or (a recent and spectacular example) of Saddam Hussein in post-Ba'athist Baghdad, makes emphatically clear. Beside these manifestations, the attack on Lady Thatcher's statue, by a lone theatre producer and more than a decade after she was forced from office, seems a rather tame spectacle; a recollection of popular discontent rather than its actuality, perhaps.

<sup>24</sup> Smith 1988, 117.



context. What is vital in each case is to establish the identity of the image, the author, the audience (or audiences) and the historical and social background.<sup>25</sup>

## (B) ROYAL IDEOLOGY: THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONVERSATION<sup>26</sup>

‘Saith Darius the King: This is what I did; by the favour of Ahuramazda, in one and the same year I did (it). Thou who shalt hereafter read this inscription, let that which has been done by me convince thee; do not thou consider it false. ...

‘Saith Darius the King: By the favour of Ahuramazda and of me much else was done; that has not been inscribed in this inscription; for this reason it has not been inscribed, lest whoso shall hereafter read this inscription, to him what has been done by me seems excessive, (and) it not convince him, (but) he think it false.’ (Inscription of Darius I of Persia at Behistun; Kent 1950, 116-134, Db column IV §§56, 58)

What do we mean by ‘royal ideology’? Ideology, of course, is very much a contested term. It might be summarily defined as ‘unified schemes or configurations developed to underwrite or manifest power’.<sup>27</sup> Royal ideology can be defined as the entire scheme or structure of public images, utterances and manifestations by which a monarchical regime depicts itself and asserts and justifies its right to rule. It is the display and articulation, and also (as the epigraph on Demetrius from the previous section reminds us) on occasion the creator of power. But we must always remember that these representations and utterances do not exist in a void. ‘Power’ itself, in a social or political sense, does not exist as an abstraction; it is always to be observed in action, within human societies. Ideology is hardly ever a monolithic doctrine. It is formulated in reaction to ‘claim and counter-claim ... argument and counter-argument’.<sup>28</sup> Royal ideology is constructed by the transmission and reception of messages, between king and subject or king and rival; actor and audience, one might say. Particular virtuosity in transmitting certain kinds of message (whether threats, benefactions, claims on loyalty; blackmail or bribes) may reap its own reward of enhanced power and prestige – both for rulers and ruled.

This kind of messaging, when disseminated ‘top-down’, is sometimes termed ‘propaganda’. While many historians are happy to use the term with minimal caution when discussing a variety of societies and ideological systems, ancient

<sup>25</sup> Cf. on coins and audiences Hekster 2003. In general Elsner 1995.

<sup>26</sup> While this book was in preparation, the British Labour Party introduced what it called its “Big Conversation” initiative, an attempt to “reconnect” with the electorate. Encouraged by this, we have retained the section heading above; after all, the fact that an idea becomes momentarily fashionable does not necessarily render it untrue or unproductive.

<sup>27</sup> Wolf 1999, 4, discussed with its place in a wider debate (pp. 1-67). Cf. Ando 2000, 19-48, and DeRose Evans 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson 1990, 294; cf. 73.

historians, particularly in the English-speaking world, have been taught to be more circumspect. Propaganda, we are told, is too one-dimensional a concept to do justice to the complexity of royal ideology, particularly in antiquity; it conveys a sense of highly self-conscious communication to a largely passive mass audience.<sup>29</sup> 'Propaganda', as a concept, may well be described as an interpretative nightmare. In the strictest sense, the term referred to the affairs of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. This papal body, founded in 1622, was formed to advance adherence to the key doctrines decided upon at the Council of Trent.<sup>30</sup> From then on, the word 'propaganda' has led a life of its own, via its usage by opponents of the French Revolution as a term to describe their rivals' persuasion-techniques,<sup>31</sup> through Goebbels' objections to, and Hitler's insistence on, its presence in the name for the new ministry in Nazi Germany which was going to be led by Goebbels.<sup>32</sup> A multitude of widely varying definitions has been developed, and many of these have been applied to the ancient world without apparent consideration of meaning or aptness. Only the division into 'agitation propaganda' – aimed at changing attitudes – and 'integration propaganda' – aimed at reinforcing them – appears as an element of common consent.<sup>33</sup>

We appreciate that there are many problems in using the term 'propaganda', at any rate without scare quotes, but think that the concept may still have a useful function in interpreting ancient cultures. Its application may need rethinking, and its definition clarifying, but to erase the notion from our theoretical framework entirely would result in losing too all the theories and explanations associated with it – an entire set of possibly useful tools. It is also questionable to what extent using alternative words is substantially different from using the term 'propaganda' itself, when what is essentially meant is dissemination of ideas by people in power in specific periods, or whether side-stepping the question 'by referring simply to the undoubted 'political themes' ... rather than to 'propaganda'...', solves the problem.<sup>34</sup> Power needs an image, and images are power. 'Propaganda is not evil or avoidable, ... it can be both a conscious trait and an unconscious, instinctive, reinforcement of self-identity and the promotion of a form of knowledge held to be true'.<sup>35</sup> Whatever image the individual or group in power wishes to transmit, it can only do so if the audience finds enough in that image to agree on. In the ancient world, propaganda 'served primarily to create goodwill towards the emperor amongst important groups of subjects, rather than to induce any

<sup>29</sup> Illustrative is Galinsky 1996, 39. See now Weber / Zimmermann 2003, which unfortunately appeared too late to be properly incorporated in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Taithe / Thornton 1999b, 1; Kontler 1999, 97.

<sup>31</sup> Dipper / Schieder 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Taithe / Thornton, 1999b, 1; Reuth 1993, 172-3.

<sup>33</sup> As formulated by Ellul 1973. See also DeRose Evans 1992, especially 1-16.

<sup>34</sup> Howgego 1995, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Taithe / Thornton, 1999b, 3. Already Charlesworth 1937, 106: '[Propaganda] is not bad in itself – it depends upon how you use it'.

particular behaviour'.<sup>36</sup> It was 'a statement that confirmed expectations, united ruler and ruled, and thereby ensured the former's legitimacy'.<sup>37</sup> Propaganda thus paradoxically became a two-way process, to an extent existing almost beyond the power of rulers to intervene.<sup>38</sup> In shaping their public image with regard to their subjects and their subjects' wishes, rulers in effect allowed those wishes to define the rulers themselves.

Thus the royal image is constructed through relations between king and subject. By depicting himself or allowing himself to be depicted in certain ways, in certain contexts or with certain accoutrements, the monarch shapes expectations of his rule. More riskily, he allows judgement to be passed on his activities. A king's subjects may, almost certainly will, have (socially constructed) expectations of how the monarch, any monarch, should behave. The ruler himself may contribute to the creation of such expectations. Conforming to type may provide, for the king, a cloak of respectability, a pleasing fable to disguise the grim reality of control backed by force that lurks beneath. But while the most powerful and secure monarch may perhaps defeat expectations, rule by whim and behave despotically and repressively, for most monarchies, most of the time, there is no doubt value in preserving at least the veneer of cordiality in relations with subjects. Not the least significant purpose of this is to secure the cooperation of local populations and especially local elites. Unless a monarch wishes to create an entirely new regional power-structure from scratch (something of which the typical ancient dynast may not even have been capable, save in very localised, specific contexts), there is much to be said, purely in terms of economy of effort, for adapting local structures and discourses of power to new ends. As an example one might take the city of Babylon, occupied by Cyrus of Persia in 539 BC; in the famous 'Cyrus Cylinder', a clay foundation cylinder of traditional Babylonian type, inscribed in Akkadian, the Persian conqueror presented himself in traditional Babylonian terms as the ruler chosen by Marduk, the chief Babylonian god.<sup>39</sup>

I, Cyrus, king of the universe, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters ... when I had entered Babylon peacefully, I set up, with acclamation and rejoicing, the seat of lordship in the palace of the ruler. Marduk, the great lord, [...] me the great heart, [...] of Babylon, daily I cared for his worship. My numerous troops marched peacefully through Babylon. I did not allow any troublemaker to arise in the whole land of Sumer and Akkad. ... Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at my [good] deeds. (Cyrus Cylinder, extract: Kuhrt 1995, 602)

<sup>36</sup> Hannestad 1986, 343. Cf. Charlesworth. 1937, 125: 'the bond between ruler and ruled was one of goodwill and faith'.

<sup>37</sup> Cullhed 1994, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Taithe / Thornton, 1999b, 4, arguing strongly against Ellul's notion of propaganda as a state-tool, closely linked to the development of 'mass production and technological drives'.

<sup>39</sup> Discussed by Kuhrt 1987a, esp. 48-55.

Likewise, a little over two centuries later, when Alexander the Great's troops overran Babylonia in 331, the Macedonian king took pains to portray himself in similar terms, as Arrian reports:

At Babylon too he met the Chaldaeans [Babylonian priests], and carried out all their recommendations on the Babylonian temples, and in particular sacrificed to Bel [Marduk], according to their instructions (*Anabasis* 3.16.5).

Both Cyrus and Alexander were playing to Babylonian audiences by their actions; even if the message they were conveying was not one that all Babylonians wanted to hear (regime-change), it was at least conveyed according to tropes and conventions that they could understand. The ritual acclamations and rejoicing that purportedly accompanied the new kings' arrivals were clearly, in their turn, what the kings would have wanted to hear.<sup>40</sup> The extent to which these responses truly represented the doubtless highly diverse reactions of locals to the arrival of the conquerors must remain in doubt.

The responses of subjects to manifestations of royal power clearly mattered. Recent work on the relations between Hellenistic kings and Greek cities has emphasised the complexity and subtlety of their interaction; we should neither be wholly taken in by the correspondence between monarchs and cities that is preserved in inscriptions, with its emphasis on 'alliance', 'friendship' and 'benefaction' rather than oppression, control and exaction; nor should we be too sceptical, constructing as an alternative reality an image of the royal jackboot on the submissive civic neck. The truth surely lay between these two extremes.<sup>41</sup> The language of relations between cities and kings expressed, on the one hand, a series of royal expectations of the cities, and on the other, the cities' expectations of the king.<sup>42</sup> A king might choose to disregard these expectations. If he did, he might be forced to take the consequences. These might range from loss of reputation (no hardship, perhaps) to loss of loyal support and defections to rivals.

Similar expectations existed at Rome. One might wonder, for example, what function the Roman Senate served under the Principate. Could emperors afford entirely to ignore it? As Fergus Millar has remarked, the Senate, 'for all its apparent powerlessness did none the less embody and express a quite coherent set of demands and expectations which offered unmistakable guidelines that Emperors crossed at their peril.'<sup>43</sup> Royal ideology should be understood as a dialogue between king and subject. Power might be concentrated in the hands of the king, but the way in which subjects' expectations and responses could mould

<sup>40</sup> For acclamation of Alexander at Babylon, see Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.16.3; for 'acclaiming the conqueror' as a ritualised response to a change of ruler in the Near East, see e.g. Kuhrt 1990. Compare also Sherwin-White 1987, 9; Sherwin-White / Kuhrt 1993, 140, emphasising the point that these were 'negotiated' responses rather than spontaneous outbursts of joy.

<sup>41</sup> See Ma 2000a, 37-8 and *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> A similar process can be detected in the Roman world, as illustrated through inscriptions (e.g. Reynolds 1982) and noticeably local coinage, now assembled in *Roman Provincial Coinage*.

<sup>43</sup> Millar, *TLS*, 15 February 1985, 175, reviewing Talbert 1984; cited by Sherwin-White 1987, 9 n. 7.

and direct royal power should not be ignored. Of course, we must beware of viewing 'subjects' as a homogeneous entity. It is obvious that the kind of royal image constructed by the 'dialogue' between Roman emperor and Senate is not necessarily the same as that constructed by the relations of that emperor and (say) a city in Asia Minor or a client-king in Britain. Indeed, Roman emperors tended to avoid so far as possible even conveying the impression that the Senate was 'subject' to them at all; 'partnership' was much more the tone of the ideal relationship as negotiated by the more successful emperors.

Similarly, the seductive phrase 'the Babylonian response to Cyrus' risks obscuring the multiplicity of reactions, along a spectrum from wholehearted acceptance to unqualified hostility, that Achaemenid rule can be presumed to have generated in southern Mesopotamia. When we discuss the relations between a king and his audience(s), we must be clear about whom each audience is supposed to contain. That this can be a difficult task is neatly conveyed by the epigraph to this chapter, extracted from the Old Persian version of Darius I's trilingual inscription from his monument at Behistun (further discussed by Fowler). Darius' rock-relief commemorates in words and images the spectacular sequence of victories which allowed him in the space of a single year to lay claim to the Persian empire. This involved defeating both a pretender to the throne of Persia itself (Gaumata), and a series of secessionist monarchs in the provinces. Darius' self-celebration and self-justification (for there was clearly some doubt about the legitimacy of his own succession) is addressed not to any specific audience, but seemingly to the world at large.<sup>44</sup> 'Thou who shalt hereafter read' is given the opportunity of reading in Akkadian, Elamite or Old Persian. Moreover, Darius shows a solicitous concern for his own credibility. He edits out some of his activities, 'lest ... what has been done by me seems excessive' and thus unbelievable. Quite who might have been intended to read this material is unclear, although the languages selected for the inscription are clearly significant. The Old Persian script appears to have been an Achaemenid royal creation precisely for monumental contexts, while Akkadian, though apparently 'the language of international diplomacy' in the Near East as late as the early first millennium B.C., seems increasingly to have given place to Aramaic in a variety of official contexts by the time of the Achaemenids.<sup>45</sup> The aim is monumentality, not mass intelligibility. Rather than speaking to any particular audience, Darius seems to have been concerned, like the emperor Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, to 'set the record straight'. His tendentious assertions about his accession are intended, rather in Thucydidean terms, as a 'possession for all time'.<sup>46</sup>

Royal ideology is not shaped simply by the two-way conversation between king and subject. Firstly, of course, the very notion of 'subject' is frequently a contested area. While a monarch may purpose to reduce an ideological interlocutor into the status of a subject, in practice this may be no more than an

<sup>44</sup> See Briant 1996, 119-127 (2002, 107-114).

<sup>45</sup> See Kuhrt 1995, 649 (Old Persian); 346-7 (Akkadian).

<sup>46</sup> Thucydides 1.22.4.

ambition, or wishful thinking, and in any case may be wholly alien to the perspective of the interlocutor himself. A notorious instance is the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, where it states: (33) 'The Parthian and Median peoples sent to me ambassadors of their nobility who sought and received kings from me ...'. The impression that the text allows to be conveyed (while it never asserts it explicitly) is that Parthia and Media had become subject kingdoms of Rome.<sup>47</sup> This sense that the Roman empire was somehow elastic, that it had 'fuzzy boundaries', sits well with the general ideological pose of the Augustan regime that Rome ruled the world, that the empire was limitless, *sine fine*.<sup>48</sup> Of course, any such suggestion would have been vigorously disputed by the Parthian leaders who had thrashed Crassus' army, overrun Syria and given Antony's forces a bloody nose in the years before the creation of the Roman Principate. In sum, to talk about royal ideology as dialogue between king and subject is to oversimplify in two respects. As we have already suggested, 'subjects', even 'subject-cities' or 'subject-groups', are not monolithic; the phenomenon of royal rule will evoke a whole spectrum of responses from subject populations. The medium of official documentation will no doubt tend to 'flatten out' or homogenise these responses; but we need to read behind the honorific rhetoric to the diversity beneath. In addition, the very definition of 'subject' is (inevitably) an area of controversy and contestation.

This is not the only respect in which our picture needs to be nuanced. For the second problem with the 'two-way conversation' model is that it fails to take account of a crucial area in which the royal image is shaped – in the relations between the monarch and other monarchs or rival powers. It is just as important to a monarch to project an image to rivals or potential enemies as to communicate with his subjects, and using images to assert or create power over a rival is as valuable as using them for similar purposes on an acknowledged subordinate. Once again, however, the process is generally two-way; the 'ideological interference' between rival powers can produce interesting effects. Particularly suggestive examples are provided by relations between Rome and the Hellenistic monarchies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. Here we find cross-influences which, on the one hand, generate significant developments in how Roman senatorial elites present themselves in public. Indeed, in figures such as Sulla, Pompey and Julius Caesar we can see a progressive 'basilization' of the Roman generals' image. Leading Romans become more kinglike, receiving honours in quasi-monarchical terms in the Greek East, being portrayed on coins (as monarchs were and Roman politicians were not), and exercising autocratic powers in their provinces (discussed by Gisborne).

On the other hand, in the Hellenistic kingdoms, we find the royal image being reshaped by Roman influences. The most spectacular example is undoubtedly that of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, who is supposed to have gone so far as to

<sup>47</sup> For the translation, see Brunt / Moore 1967, 35. Compare *Res Gestae* 29.2; 32.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Mehl 1994; Nicolet 1988, 27-68 (1991, 15-56).

adopt the white toga of Roman electoral candidates, and affected the manner and curule chair of a Roman magistrate while giving judgement in lawsuits in his capital, Antioch.<sup>49</sup> Antiochus' enthusiasm for Roman institutions and Roman clothes should not lead us to believe that he was simply a would-be Roman client, internalising Roman culture as a mark of his subjection. On the contrary, his friendliness towards Perseus, king of Macedon, and his spectacular military parade at Daphne, seemingly a defiant response to his ejection from Egypt by Roman ambassadors in 168 BC, indicate that he was pursuing policies vigorously independent of Rome if not actively opposed to it. Antiochus' 'Romanism' is presumably to be read as an attempt to associate his public image with the mechanisms of the Roman state which over the preceding fifty years had proved massively successful in outmatching the Great Powers of the Hellenistic East. Rather different is the case of those monarchs such as Antiochus I of Commagene, who assumed the title *Philoromaïos*; here the implication is of a Roman *rex amicus*, in other words, not of rivalry, but of more or less explicit subjection to Rome. However, even this conclusion may be less clear-cut than one might imagine, since in spite of the protestation of loyalty to Rome which the title might seem to convey, Antiochus I simultaneously maintained a marriage alliance with the ruling dynasty of Parthia (discussed by Facella).

Of course, one should not draw a sharp distinction between this category of king-rival dialogue and the case of king-subject dialogue. As we have seen, 'subject' is a slippery concept, and the whole purpose of projecting royal images is to assert power, which may include an assertion of power over the recipient of the image. The distinction between a rival and a subordinate is by no means always clear-cut. When Alexander the Great honours the tomb and memory of Cyrus of Persia, and adopts certain aspects of Persian royal costume, this is self-evidently not just an attempt to make his status as a king comprehensible in a Persian context, but rather a direct claim to be the legitimate ruler of Persia in succession to the Achaemenids.<sup>50</sup> He is no longer challenging Persia as a rival power, but marking its subordination to him. By contrast, the titles claimed by the notorious Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, most notably 'Conqueror of the British Empire' and 'Last King of Scotland', conveyed no doubt an ideological programme (of sorts), directed against Britain as the former colonial power, but with no opportunity or even serious intention to turn the rival into a subordinate<sup>51</sup>.

We are left with a model of royal ideology that looks something more like a three-way dialogue, between king and subject and between king and rival (always

<sup>49</sup> See Mørkholm 1966, especially 39-40; 130; Polybius 26.1, 1a.

<sup>50</sup> Though it is enough to prompt Strabo's famous assessment of Alexander as *philokyros* ('Cyrus-lover'); Strabo 11.11.4 C517. For Alexander's (ambiguous) attitude to Persian royal symbols see further below.

<sup>51</sup> For two recent evocations, vivid and disturbing, of Amin's Uganda, see Ryszard Kapuściński's essay, 'Amin' (Kapuściński 2002, 137-146), and Giles Foden's novel, *The Last King of Scotland* (Foden 1998).

allowing for the possibility, indeed inevitability, of slippage between the categories of 'subject' and 'rival'). As in any dialogue, there is the perennial possibility of misreadings, misunderstandings, miscommunication. Thus Antiochus IV's Romanophilia prompted incomprehension among observers, as Polybius reports; 'In consequence all respectable men were entirely puzzled about him, some looking upon him as a plain simpleton and others as a madman' (Polybius 26.1.7). What is unclear in this case is who had misunderstood whom; was Antiochus' interpretation of Roman political culture simply a misunderstanding, as Polybius rather implies, or had Polybius, and indeed other contemporary observers, simply underestimated the radical nature of Antiochus' programme?<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes the whole of a dialogue between king and subject can proceed on the basis of (seemingly) wilful misunderstanding or reinterpretation. A good example is provided by the celebrated letter of the Roman emperor Claudius to the city of Alexandria in Egypt in 41 AD.<sup>53</sup> Acknowledging the honours offered to him by the city, the emperor states (ll. 48-51):

But a priest for me and erection of temples I reject, not wishing to be offensive to the men of my time and judging that temples and such things to the gods alone should be reserved and granted by every age.

A fairly explicit rejection of divine cult, one might reasonably conclude, though the context of religious unrest in which the letter was composed might have something to do with that. Yet the prescript of the prefect of Egypt, L. Aemilius Rectus, added to the text on its publication, contains the following (ll. 6-9): '... I thought it necessary to publish the letter in order that, man for man, as you read it, the greatness of our god Caesar might be a wonder to you ...'. The emperor's own rejection of divine cult is dramatically undercut by the use of the divine epithet. Again, we are left with an uncertainty. Has Rectus simply misunderstood the implications of his master's letter, or is the emperor being coyly disingenuous? In the latter case, perhaps the prefect's response, generated by 'reading between the lines', is actually correct.

One further aspect of our 'dialogue model' must be mentioned. Thus far, whether discussing king-subject or king-rival relations, our emphasis has been entirely synchronic. It is obvious, however, that the factors which shape royal images include, perhaps are dominated by, the examples of the past. Thus we must build a diachronic component into our model. The elements which constitute the public image of Roman Republican generals, and the early emperors, are not merely contemporary models of kingship; the images of the ancient kings of Rome, or of Alexander the Great, are also relevant. Thus Julius Caesar made play with Etruscan royal symbolism, while Augustus considered adopting the title 'Romulus'. Again, many emperors, including Augustus and perhaps Trajan (and indeed Pompey in the late Republic) made sophisticated use of the image of

<sup>52</sup> As suggested by some modern commentators, especially Mørkholm 1966.

<sup>53</sup> *P. London* 1912; *CPJ* II.153. Translation: Sherk 1988 no. 44.



Alexander.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Near Eastern dynasts in the Seleucid penumbra hark back more or less consciously to the Achaemenid Persian royal past. Claims to Achaemenid ancestry and/or the Achaemenid succession are visible spectacularly in the case of the Commagenian royal family, but also in the royal ideologies of Parthia, Armenia and Pontus (as discussed by Facella and Fowler). Kings practise a continuous appropriation, reshaping and redeployment of 'the royal past' as a means of constructing their own imaginary present. Thus contemporary actors are engaged in a permanent dialogue with the past, and in particular with past models of kingship. In an important sense, we would contend, the royal image is constructed in fact by a *four-dimensional* dialogue.

### (C) IMAGE AND POWER: THE CREATION OF LEGITIMACY

Monarchy. It is neither descent nor legitimacy which gives monarchies to men, but the ability to command an army and to handle affairs competently. Such was the case with Philip and the Successors of Alexander. For Alexander's natural son was in no way helped by his kinship with him, because of his weakness of spirit, while those who had no connection with Alexander became kings of almost the whole inhabited world (Suda, s.v. *Basileia* (2); translation: Austin 1981 no. 37).

Our concern so far has been with royal images as both manifestations and creators of power. It might be objected that to focus on royal representation (whether through text or images) is really to miss the point. Surely, it might reasonably be argued, running a kingdom is not simply about projecting images. A successful kingdom is one which, at its most basic, is able to exert military dominion over its subjects and rivals, and to sustain itself (and its army) by the exaction of surpluses from its population. Whatever the ideological superstructure, this is the economic base on which monarchical power, any state-power, properly rests. Of course, at one level this must be true; and it is important not to be blinded to the economic fundamentals that govern power-relationships. When Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees, who want to know whether they should pay imperial taxes to Rome, he asks to see a Roman silver coin:

And they brought unto him a penny [denarius]. And he saith unto them 'Whose is this image and superscription?' They say unto him, 'Caesar's.' Then saith he unto them, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's ...'.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> On late-Republican recycling of royal pasts, see Gisborne in this volume. See also Rawson 1975, 148-59; on the use of Alexander's image, Fowler in this volume, n. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 22.19-21; Cf. Mark 12.16-17, Luke 20.24-25.

A coin-portrait or coin-legend is a statement of monarchical authority, and bears ideologically-charged messages; but it is also, and crucially, the marker of a tax-authority, and the expression of economic power.

The very fact that a coin may discharge these two functions simultaneously is an indication that it is simplistic to regard military dominion and tax-extraction as the only features of a monarchic or imperial regime worth analysing. In fact, the question of legitimacy is always in play. It is absolutely to the point that the silver coin shown to Jesus bore the portrait and name of the Caesar. These are markers of authority, which give to the imperial regime the right to claim the coin as its own; they are also the markers that make the coin acceptable as money among the inhabitants of the Roman Empire and beyond. The image and name of the Caesar on the coin are, in a sense, 'performative utterances', by which is meant utterances that do things, that 'promise something, issue orders, warn of trouble, or initiate a change of conditions, such as declaring someone to be married or installing a personage in a seat of power and prestige'.<sup>56</sup> The coin is both an assertion of political authority and a guarantee of a system of economic exchange, under which broad heading must be included tax-exaction by the legitimating authority. But critics have emphasised 'that the speech-act lacks power and validity unless it is institutionally authorized and carried out by a person with the appropriate cultural credentials'.<sup>57</sup> The coin would fail in political terms without a collective acceptance of the Caesar's position; more importantly, it would fail in economic terms but for the fact that the emperor's symbols operated as a guarantee of the weight and fineness of the bullion.<sup>58</sup> What makes the coinage 'the things which are Caesar's' is the collective recognition of the authority of the Roman emperor. This in turn is based on a web of traditional and legitimating symbols, in short on an imperial ideology.

It is in the light of this that we must read the epigraph to this section. At one level, the Byzantine encyclopedia known as the *Suda* contains a truism. Descent and legitimacy are obviously not enough to found a state. Military force and administrative competence are essential. The period after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, when for over forty years his generals fought each other to the death for control of his empire, is as good an illustration of the point as any. At the same time, armies and bureaucracies are not enough; one can only achieve so much at the point of a Roman *pilum* or a Macedonian *sarissa*. The *Suda*'s claim is, of course, tendentious, and it is notable how much effort Alexander's Successors in fact put into making themselves appear legitimate rulers, whether

<sup>56</sup> Wolf 1999, 56, referring to Austin 1976; see Ma 2000b.

<sup>57</sup> Wolf 1999, 56, referring to Bourdieu / Wacquant 1992, 148, who remark: '[Symbolic power] is defined in and by a definite relation that creates belief in the legitimacy of the words and of the person who utters them, and it operates only inasmuch as those who undergo it recognise those who wield it.'

<sup>58</sup> On coinage as the 'formalisation' of the use of bullion as money, see Kim 2001. Of course, the legitimising function of government takes on greater significance in monetary systems based not on bullion standards but on governments' promises to pay (i.e. token or base-metal coinages and paper money).

through sophisticated manipulation of Alexander's image or assiduous cultivation of contingents from Alexander's army or of local populations within his empire.<sup>59</sup> In a famous passage, St. Augustine expatiated on the difference between the monarch and the bandit:

For if there is no justice, what are kingdoms except large robber bands? ... For it was an elegant and truthful reply that was made to Alexander the Great by a certain pirate he had captured. For when the king asked the fellow, why it was that he should torment the sea, he replied with defiant outspokenness: 'For the same reason that you torment the world! I do it with a little ship, and so am called a pirate. You do it with a large fleet, and so you are called a king'.<sup>60</sup>

One might argue that the essential practical distinction between the monarch and the warlord is that the former creates (or at least attempts to create, however ineffectively or disingenuously) at least some reasons to support his rule beyond the mere threat of military force. However much they depend on soldiers and tax-collectors, a good part of monarchs' power rests on their ability to win not just the bodies but the minds of their subjects. Claims to royal legitimacy of one sort or another are invariably advanced. This is the fundamental importance of royal ideology.

It might then be asked what makes a monarch. How do you recognise one? A good starting-point is provided by Hellenistic writers, who offered what purported to be an answer. We return once again to the first epigraph to this chapter. What makes Demetrius a king, according to Diodorus (or rather his source, presumably Demetrius' contemporary Hieronymus of Cardia<sup>61</sup>), is his appearance. We might compare the well-known encounter in 206 BC between the Seleucid king Antiochus III and Euthydemus, a Greek from Magnesia, who had set himself up as king of Bactria. Euthydemus, having endured a lengthy siege at Antiochus' hands, finally sent his son, another Demetrius, to settle a peace treaty. Whereupon, according to Polybius (11.34.9):

Antiochus, on receiving the young man and judging him from his appearance, conversation and dignity of bearing to be worthy of the royal rank, in the first place promised to give him one of his daughters in marriage and next gave permission to his father to style himself king.

Demetrius and his father are judged worthy to be kings because they look and behave like kings.<sup>62</sup> In fact, the Hellenistic age evolved a highly elaborate theory of appropriate royal appearance, which appears to have informed royal portrait

<sup>59</sup> Cultivating Alexander's image: Stewart 1993. Cultivating Alexander's army: e.g. Eumenes; see Plutarch, *Eumenes* 13; Diodorus 18.60-61; 19.15 (discussed further below). Cultivating local populations: e.g. Seleucus in Babylon; Sherwin-White / Kuhrt 1993, ch.1.

<sup>60</sup> Augustine, *Civitas Dei* 4.4 (extracts); see Austin 1986, 465-6.

<sup>61</sup> See Hornblower 1981.

<sup>62</sup> Compare the encounter of the Indian king Porus with Alexander, as reported by Arrian; Alexander purportedly confirmed Porus' royal title on similar grounds (*Anabasis* 5.19.1-3).

styles as well as philosophical treatises.<sup>63</sup> In one sense, it seems that what makes a king is simply looking like one.

This conclusion raises an obvious problem. It is all very well for the public to conclude that Demetrius Poliorcetes looked like a king, or for Antiochus to decide the same about Euthydemus' son. In fact, of course, the reasoning risks being circular; his public are already aware that Poliorcetes is a king, while Antiochus' 'grant' of the title may be no more than the acknowledgement of a reality that he was in no position to challenge. One is left with an entirely self-fulfilling prophecy. One recognises a king because he looks like a king, knowing that he looks like a king because he is one. Defining kingship by appearance does little more than tell people what they already know.

An alternative means of defining kingship involves not appearance but action. Kings may define themselves by what they do. Particularly in traditional societies, royal action is frequently anchored to the divine or supernatural. Perhaps the best-attested royal 'supernatural' power is the ability to cure disease. The Roman world supplies two celebrated examples of this. First was the emperor Vespasian, who, at the time he laid claim to the throne in Alexandria in 69 AD, was petitioned by two men, one blind, the other with a withered hand. In spite of his own scepticism, it is reported, Vespasian touched both men and cured them. In the words of Suetonius:

Vespasian as yet lacked *auctoritas* and a certain *maiestas*, so to speak, since he was an unexpected and still new-made emperor; but these attributes were also given him.<sup>64</sup>

The miracle cure supplied Vespasian with prestige and authority. Similarly, Hadrian is reported to have cured a man and a woman of blindness.<sup>65</sup> The 'royal touch' took on a highly formalised significance in Western Europe, where 'touching for the King's Evil' as a cure for scrofula formed an important weapon of the royal ideological armoury in both England and France.<sup>66</sup> As late as the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, ideological programmes could be advanced by the reported effectiveness or otherwise of this activity. Charles II of England, for example, is reported to have touched about eight thousand victims of scrofula in a single year to attempt a cure, and thereby affirm his right to rule.<sup>67</sup> The significance of royal miracles was reaffirmed during the Exclusion Crisis, which rumbled on in England through the late 1670s and early 1680s. The crisis revolved around the two candidates to succeed Charles II as king: James, Duke of York, the king's brother, naval hero of the recent war against the Dutch, but

<sup>63</sup> See Smith 1988 ch. 5, esp. 50-53.

<sup>64</sup> Suetonius, *Vesp.* 7.2-3. Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.81.

<sup>65</sup> SHA, *Hadrian*, 25.1-4.

<sup>66</sup> See Hopkins 1978, 231-2; classic discussions in Bloch 1924 and Thomas 1973. Remarks on the development of the ritual in France at the time of Louis XIV in Burke 1998, 252-3. The ritual of 'touching for the King's Evil' continues in ossified form in contemporary Britain, in the presentation of 'Maundy money' by the monarch on the Thursday before Good Friday each year ('Maundy Thursday').

<sup>67</sup> Hopkins 1978, 231-2

crucially a Catholic, and James, Duke of Monmouth, dissolute playboy, illegitimate son of the king (illegitimate, at least, unless one believed the story of the 'Black Box'), but crucially a Protestant.<sup>68</sup> In the circumstances, with anti-Catholic sentiment running high, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that in 1681 a pamphlet appeared which claimed that Monmouth had managed to cure a victim of scrofula by touching her. The discovery came to be presented in mock-serious tones, but the political implication, though unspoken, was clear enough; only a king could exercise this power. If Monmouth could cure the King's Evil, then by necessary implication he was the legitimate heir to Charles II as King of England.<sup>69</sup> The parallel with Vespasian (by necessary implication legitimate emperor because of his supernatural abilities) scarcely needs underlining.<sup>70</sup>

The converse argument could also be made. If one can show oneself a king simply by demonstrating those powers that only kings have, by 'doing what kings do', as it were, then similarly, if one fails to do those things, one's credentials may be challenged. A notable example is that of the Yorkist king of England, Edward IV. It was put about by supporters of his rival, the Lancastrian Henry VI, that Edward had been unable to cure scrofula. By necessary implication, he was not a legitimate king.<sup>71</sup>

Supernatural affirmations of royal legitimacy clearly have a role to play in establishing the credentials of monarchs in numerous societies; it may be no surprise to find that such stories cling most persistently to the biographies of dynastic founders like Vespasian. Miraculous tales of various sorts are found associated with leaders as diverse as Moses and Sargon of Akkad, Cyrus of Persia and Cypselus tyrant of Corinth, Romulus and Seleucus I.<sup>72</sup> As founders of dynasties, men who started their careers perhaps as minor functionaries, outsiders or warlords, such figures naturally require the kind of ideological capital that 'divine legitimation' can provide. In addition, there is a wider gain for the audience of such stories. The idea that royal power can descend seemingly at random on an obscure individual might seem too disturbing, too disruptive, too

<sup>68</sup> For helpful discussion of political ideology during the Exclusion Crisis, see Harris 1987.

<sup>69</sup> The story comes from the pamphlet, *His Grace the Duke of Monmouth Honoured in His Progress in the West of England in an Account of a most Extraordinary Cure of the Kings Evil* (Anon. 1681). We are indebted to S.J. Nolten for this reference.

<sup>70</sup> Monmouth's bid for power, of course, was less successful; he was beheaded after leading an abortive revolt against the Duke of York (by then King James II) in 1685. Barely three years later, in a final irony, James himself was overthrown by the "Glorious Revolution", and in his place the Protestant Dutch prince William of Orange was installed as English king.

<sup>71</sup> See Cheesman and Williams 2000, 67.

<sup>72</sup> The stories of Moses, Sargon, Cyrus, Cypselus and Romulus are all manifestations of one particular type of "royal miracle", the exposure (and miraculous rescue) of the royal child: see Binder 1964; Murray 1967. The case of Seleucus, founder of the Seleucid dynasty, is different; the stories which became attached to his name relate to his connection with Alexander the Great. See Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.22; Appian, *Syriakē* 56 (Alexander's royal diadem falls into the Euphrates, and is rescued by Seleucus who wears it on his head to bring it back: a portent of Seleucus' future kingship); Diodorus 19.90 (Alexander (in a dream) and the god Apollo (in an oracle) predict Seleucus' elevation to the royal title).

much an indication of a chaotic universe. Far more comfortable to rest assured that the guiding hand of divine power is at work, elevating God's Anointed to his appropriate if unexpected position.

Royal looks and royal deeds are clearly important. But for a monarch to create an appearance of legitimacy, it is not enough simply to look the right way or do the right things. For, fairly obviously, what those 'right things' are is itself socially constructed, and generally on the basis of expectations and understandings produced by previous monarchs or regimes. Thus, as we have suggested, monarchs are engaged in a continuous process of dialogue with the past. By this means the nature and extent of their power is made palatable, or even, at base, simply comprehensible to their audience (whether subjects or rivals). We have already discussed the activities of Cyrus, and of Alexander and the Seleucids at Babylon. One can, if one chooses, read Persian and Macedonian temple-patronage in a 'strong' sense as a positive affirmation that the new monarchs had adopted Babylonian cultural preferences into their own cultural outlook. Alternatively, one can take the 'weak' view, that this was a more or less cynical manoeuvre simply to make the new regime speak in a language that was comprehensible and acceptable to the local population. Whether the monarchs in question had any real belief or interest in the cult of Marduk would on this view be doubtful; but in any case this is hardly important. What matters is the fact that patronage of local cult was a medium, a language through which dialogue with Babylon could take place. Even more complexity is generated when the past with which the monarch engages is a non-monarchical one. Hence came, no doubt, the elaborate terminology of 'alliance', *symmachia*, evolved by the Macedonian kings Philip II, Alexander the Great, Antigonos I and Demetrius Poliorcetes, to shape their relations with the cities of Greece in terms that avoided, so far as possible, the language of kingship (but see Thonemann on the relation between Demetrius and Athens). One should note the use of titles such as *hegemon* ('leader') and *koinon* ('league').<sup>73</sup> Greek commentators could in general see straight through the tissue of deceit.<sup>74</sup> Hence also came the spectacular tergiversations of the early Augustan regime at Rome, which made strenuous efforts to appropriate the Republican collective past and Republican collective discourse to depict a regime which in all material respects was a monarchy.<sup>75</sup> The key challenge, as ever, was to win the minds of one's audience, using the social and historical mechanisms at one's disposal.

The most universal, and perhaps the most effective means for monarchs to legitimise their rule is the creation, manipulation and appropriation of dynastic consciousness. At the most basic level, being the legitimate heir of a king

<sup>73</sup> As starting-places see e.g. Hammond 1994, 155-164 (with a very positive view of Philip II's dealings with Greece); Bosworth 1988, part IIA (Alexander); Billows 1990 (a very positive view of Antigonos I).

<sup>74</sup> See, spectacularly, the speech which comes down to us in the Demosthenic corpus, [Demosthenes] 17.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Millar 1973; Millar 1984, 37-60 (in particular 57-58).

(however hereditary legitimacy is conceived in a particular society) is the easiest route by which to claim legitimate kingship for oneself. Thus, at Behistun, Darius sets up his family connections as the basis (alongside the favour of the god Ahuramazda) of his claim to be king of Persia:

Saith Darius the King: VIII of our family (there are) who were kings afore; I am the ninth; IX in succession we have been kings.' (Kent 1950, 116-134; Db column I §4)

Kingship 'runs in the family'. Thus Darius' seizure of the throne is justified.<sup>76</sup> Again, from the Roman empire we may compare the accession of Claudius, discovered by a Praetorian Guard hiding behind an arras after the assassination of the emperor Gaius. Claudius found himself unexpectedly acclaimed as emperor by the Praetorians, his family connection to the dynasty of Augustus outweighing the problem of his ill-health, physical disability and limited previous experience of public life.<sup>77</sup> Here Claudius' 'recognition' as emperor is triggered not by his physical appearance, but by his family connections. Similarly, Severus Alexander, that most senatorial of emperors, based his claims to the throne on his dynastic links with the dubious Elagabalus – who himself came to power whilst claiming to be Caracalla's son.<sup>78</sup>

Even where no plausible claim to familial connection can be advanced, a monarch may readily attempt to 'appropriate' dynastic legitimacy. Some assertion of 'legitimate succession' is almost invariably in play in the royal ideologies of new regimes, and such claims form an important feature of the material surveyed in this volume (especially Allen, Facella and Fowler). We have already discussed the case of Alexander, whose adoption of some aspects of Persian dress, and calculated honouring of the tomb of Cyrus the Great prompted the strictures of Arrian and caused Strabo to describe him as *philokyros*.<sup>79</sup> Alexander seems to have been setting himself up as the legitimate heir to the Persian empire; indeed he has aptly been described as the 'last of the Achaemenids' (though this may underplay the achievements and ideological claims of the early Seleucids).<sup>80</sup> The strategy of claiming to be 'legitimate successor' of a previous dynasty can be developed with great sophistication, and can operate on numerous levels. It may involve the adoption of royal sites associated with previous regimes, such as Cyrus' tomb by Alexander, or (apparently) Behistun by Parthian dynasts

<sup>76</sup> Although Darius' claim to Cyrus' throne is problematic when based on his family tree, in which Cyrus nowhere appears; on the problematic nature of Darius' assertions here, see Briant 1996, 122-4 (2002, 110-1). See also Fowler in this volume.

<sup>77</sup> Suetonius, *Claud.* 10.2-4; Wiedemann 1996, 231. Cf. Hekster 2001b, for the continuous importance of dynastic considerations in the Roman Empire.

<sup>78</sup> Dio, 79.14.1-2, 79.34.4; Herodian, 5.3.10; 5.4.2-4; SHA, *Macr.* 9.4; 14.2; 15.2; SHA, *Elagab.* 1.4.

<sup>79</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.7.3ff. For Strabo see above n. 50.

<sup>80</sup> Briant 1982, 318-330; id. 1990, 44-5.

(discussed by Fowler). It can involve using the name or titles, or even the portrait of the old ruler. Thus the Successors to Alexander used his name and portrait on their coins. The new leader may use power-symbols associated with the old regime, whether certain kinds of crown or headdress, or even a particular style of hair or beard. One elaborate and theatrical example is provided by Eumenes, Alexander the Great's Greek secretary and a leading figure in the 'monarchist' faction during the early years of the wars of the Successors. To try to firm up the wavering loyalty of his Macedonian troops, Eumenes took to holding meetings in the royal tent, with Alexander's empty throne at the head of the table, bearing the dead king's royal diadem, sceptre and armour, as though to imply that Alexander continued to chair the meeting in spirit.<sup>81</sup>

Genealogy is perhaps the ultimate weapon in this ideological game. Laying claim to actual descent from a previous dynasty is a move widely, though often unconvincingly employed. Perhaps the most spectacularly elaborate version of this approach from antiquity is that of Antiochus I of Commagene, who in his celebrated 'Ancestor Gallery' from Nemrud Dağı set out his descent in the female line from Seleucus I and (apparently) Alexander, and in the male line from Rhodogyne, daughter of the Achaemenid Artaxerxes II, and hence back to Darius I (in general see Facella). The elaboration of the monument is unique, but the nature of the claim to Achaemenid descent, as we have noted, is one widespread in the post-Seleucid Near East. Indeed, monarchs may define and present themselves as successors to an old regime across dramatic gaps in time. The Sassanid dynasty, too, in laying claim to Persia, looked back to purported Achaemenid ancestry to justify its position. Even in our own time the ideology of Near Eastern dynastic continuity has proved potent; the appropriation by the Shah of Iran of an Achaemenid past for himself has become notorious, as, more recently, has Saddam Hussein's posturing as the 'new Nebuchadnezzar', attested most spectacularly by his monumental building at the site of Babylon.

A certain methodological caution is required here, of course. Not every parallel that seems obvious to a critic is a case of imitation, and not every imitation is a case of conscious appropriation of the ideological repertoire of a past ruler. In general, we can identify three different categories of material, which we might term 'parallels', 'appropriations' and 'inventions'. At the most basic level we find simple parallels between different royal images. In the case of a 'parallel', in the sense in which we use the term here, no influence is to be postulated of one royal image on the other. Instead, we should view the similarity as being the result of two dynasts or two societies reaching similar solutions to similar problems. Thus, perhaps, we might treat the royal inscriptions of Persian kings and the *Res Gestae* of Augustus; both are examples of a particular kind of royal monumentality, but we have no need to postulate that Augustus was

<sup>81</sup> Diodorus 18.60-61; 19.15; Plutarch, *Eumenes* 13. On the use of Alexander's image generally by the Successors, see Stewart 1993, esp. chs. 8-10.



imitating the example of the Achaemenids. Indeed, a Roman context for these kinds of monuments is readily to hand.

A rather different picture is presented by those occasions when we can say with reasonable assurance that there is a real continuity between royal images, or imitation of one image by another. In a clear case of what we call 'appropriation', the symbols of the imitated dynasty are consciously adopted by the imitating monarch, whether in order to assert a kind of 'historical continuity' with the imitated dynasty (as perhaps in the case of Antiochus I of Commagene and the Achaemenids), or to assert a 'dynastic succession' to their realm (as perhaps with Alexander's use of Achaemenid symbolism). Not every imitation is an act of conscious appropriation, however. As we have already observed, sometimes an image or piece of equipment, though originally charged with a particular historical meaning, becomes no more than a symbol or a 'dead metaphor', losing its former charge. The language of royal ideology is in fact awash with these 'floating signifiers'. Sometimes, to misquote Freud, a crown is simply a crown. Thus the 'radiate crown', a type of royal headgear in which rays appear to shoot from all round the head of the wearer to create a kind of 'prickly halo' effect, appears on some late-Seleucid coinage (particularly that of Antiochus IV and some of his successors).<sup>82</sup> It later resurfaces at Rome, again as imperial headgear on coins. One might postulate that some kind of association with the Seleucid past, or some connection with the sun-god is being advanced by this style of portrait. In the Roman context, however, it appears that the radiate crown acts as the marker of a particular denomination of coin, to distinguish the *dupondius* from the *as*, and later to distinguish the *antoninianus* (double *denarius*), the double *aureus* and the double *sestertius*. Ideological resonances seem, in certain circumstances, to have been secondary.<sup>83</sup>

Further care must be exercised in interpreting cases of appropriation. What we call 'imitation' or 'continuity' may well be something rather more complex. Thus, Antiochus I of Commagene shows himself in his monuments to be well informed about Achaemenid genealogy. What he seems to know less about is Achaemenid iconography, with the result that the depictions of 'Persian-style' dress at Nemrud Dağı and elsewhere are clearly artificial constructions, bearing little or no relation to 'genuine' Achaemenid royal portraiture (Facella). Similar points can be made about Parthian royal iconography, though it is less clear in this case how far the 'Achaemenid model' is being espoused. In many respects, the Parthian royal portrait style (or 'styles') seems to be a consciously new creation (Fowler).<sup>84</sup> What we see frequently in fact is not a genuine continuity or imitation, but rather the 'invention of tradition'. Antiochus I deploys the iconography, not of the real

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<sup>82</sup> See e.g. Mørkholm 1984.

<sup>83</sup> Howgego 1995, 79.

<sup>84</sup> See Vardanyan 2001 for a detailed recent survey.

Achaemenids, but of an invented Achaemenid past.<sup>85</sup> It must be added, of course, that tradition is seldom invented in a void. Generally there needs to be *some* kind of historical consciousness on which invention can elaborate. Thus the kind of public image that Antiochus I shapes for himself is determined by the historical consciousness, shared between king and audience, of an Achaemenid royal past; but it is the way in which this tradition expresses itself that is constructed or invented.

It should also be stressed, finally, that the past can be used in an entirely different way as well. There are occasions when royal ideology emphasises discontinuity and change. In these cases, the past continues to shape the contemporary monarch's self-definition, but does so by providing models to reject or despise. Thus, in the Cyrus Cylinder from Babylon, Cyrus draws constant attention precisely to the fact that he is *not* Nabonidus, the defeated Neo-Babylonian king:

An imitation of Esagila he (sc. Nabonidus) made [...] to Ur and the other cult centres, a cult order that was unsuitable [...] he spoke daily, and, an evil thing, he stopped the regular offerings [...] he placed in the cult centres. The worship of Marduk, king of the gods, he removed from his mind. He repeatedly did that which was bad for his city. Daily [...] he destroyed all his [subjects] with an unending yoke.

By contrast, Cyrus' behaviour was such as to appeal to the chief god of Babylon:

Marduk, the great lord, who cares for his people, looked with pleasure at his (Cyrus') good deeds and his righteous heart. He (Marduk) ordered him (Cyrus) to go to Babylon, and let him take the road to Babylon. Like a friend and companion he went by his side. (Cyrus Cylinder, extracts: see Kuhrt 1995, 601.)

The nature of Cyrus' claim in Babylon is two-pronged. On the one hand he asserts his virtue as a king of traditional Babylonian type, while on the other hand portraying the last genuine Babylonian king as an impious destroyer of his own people. Cyrus' right to rule is based on the assertion that the preceding dynasty had forfeited its own rights. This of course creates a problem for a monarch who chooses to buttress his claim to legitimacy by appropriating the 'symbolic capital' of his predecessors. It may be no coincidence that the Achaemenid rulers make much more use of Assyrian royal iconography and tradition than of Babylonian in shaping their own public image. They themselves had contributed to the discrediting of Babylonian symbols of power.<sup>86</sup>

Much the same difficulty confronted Alexander in his dealings with Babylon. As Arrian reports (*Anabasis* 3.16.4), 'On entering Babylon Alexander directed the Babylonians to rebuild the temples Xerxes destroyed, and especially the temple of

<sup>85</sup> On the 'invention of tradition' in a variety of contexts, Hobsbawm / Ranger 1983, especially Hobsbawm 1983. For an example from the context of royal imagery in the ancient world, note the invention of Jewish monarchical tradition in Hasmonean royal ideology: Rajak 1996.

<sup>86</sup> We are grateful to Lindsay Allen for this point. In general see Kuhrt 1995, 598-603, esp. 602; Kuhrt 1987a.

Bel [Marduk]...’ That Xerxes had punished the Babylonian temples was widely accepted by Greek historians after Alexander, though it has recently been argued convincingly that the story is untrue or at any rate greatly exaggerated.<sup>87</sup> If Alexander himself believed the story, then his actions in restoring the temple represented a clear break with the Achaemenids. Similarly, it had been argued that Alexander’s burning of Persepolis, perhaps his most notorious anti-Persian act, was no mere accident or piece of random vandalism, but a conscious attempt to obliterate the royal material heritage of the Achaemenid dynasty, including the entire palace-complex, the throne and the rest of the royal properties.<sup>88</sup> Without the royal paraphernalia, there could not be any further genuine Achaemenid monarchs after Alexander. At the same time, of course, Alexander was busy laying claim to the Achaemenid inheritance, adopting Persian dress and marrying himself and his elites into the Iranian aristocracy.

A similarly Janus-faced attitude to the past can be observed in late-Republican Rome, where ‘monarchical consciousness’ was effectively suppressed or despised, but ‘dynastic consciousness’, in the form of competing claims to family honour, was a prominent social force. Thus Julius Caesar aggressively defined himself as hostile to the memory of the dictator Sulla, but in his behaviour, in marching on Rome and assuming the dictatorship, followed Sulla’s example closely. Likewise Augustus made much of Caesar as his adopted father, even calling himself *Divi Filius* (‘Son of a God’), but in his approach to Roman constitutional propriety approximated much more to Caesar’s deadly rival Pompey.<sup>89</sup> Much later, the usurper Maxentius showed similar ambiguity in his reactions to the ruling Tetrarchs – occasionally distancing himself from their ideological representation but adhering to it closely at other times. This was followed by Constantine the Great who had to create an ideological framework which distanced him from *both* Tetrarchs *and* Maxentius.<sup>90</sup> The co-opting of the past to serve present ideological ends is never simple or obvious. The past can be used as a model to imitate or a model to avoid; in some cases, the same element of the past can be made simultaneously a model to imitate and to avoid.

#### (D) FROM PERSIA TO ROME: THE LIMITS OF MONARCHY

About this time he [Augustus] had the sarcophagus containing Alexander the Great’s mummy removed from its shrine and, after a long look at its features, showed his

<sup>87</sup> Kuhrt / Sherwin-White 1987b.

<sup>88</sup> See Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993b.

<sup>89</sup> Caesar’s anti-Sullan stance: Seager 1994b, 210. Cf. Suetonius, *Iul.* 1 and 11. Later, however, Caesar restored statues of both Sulla and Pompey: Dio 63.49.1; Suetonius, *Iul.* 75.4; Yavetz 1983, 96. For Augustus’ attitude to Caesar and Pompey: Syme 1979a, 213–6. Pompey was put forward as one of Augustus’ ancestors in the latter’s funerary procession of AD 14 (Dio, 56.34). The importance of Caesar’s nomenclature is set out in Syme 1979b. Cf. Millar 2000b.

<sup>90</sup> Hekster 1999.

reverence by crowning the head with a golden diadem and strewing flowers on the trunk. When asked 'Would you now like to visit the Mausoleum of the Ptolemies?' he replied: 'I came to see a King, not a row of corpses.' (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 18)<sup>91</sup>

Even now, when luxury has increased so much, the gardens of Lucullus are counted among the most costly of the imperial gardens. As for his works on the seashore and in the vicinity of Naples ... when Tiberius the Stoic saw them, he called him Xerxes in a toga. (Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus* 39.2-3)

In the light of our comments above, it should be reasonably clear why we have selected the parameters of this volume as we have. We range from royal ideology in Achaemenid Persia to the public images of Roman emperors, Parthian kings, and those dynasts in the Roman-Parthian penumbra. Our subject is therefore a series of interlocking societies which provide, in their diverse approaches to representing monarchical power, a sequence not merely of 'parallels' (to employ the terminology defined above) but of 'appropriations'. The continuing significance of the Achaemenid tradition in the late- and post-Hellenistic Near East (whether 'remembered' or 'invented') has already been noted. Similarly, it is apparent that Hellenistic monarchy in the tradition of Alexander continued to shape the public image of dynasts and emperors in the Roman empire and even among the Roman elites themselves. Even where the ideological claims of Hellenistic monarchy were explicitly rejected, the image of Alexander could not be ignored so easily. As is apparent from the first epigraph of this section, the supreme ruler of the Roman world in 30 BC might affect to despise the Ptolemaic dynasty whose last representative he had just defeated. By contrast, he would be careful to pay his respects to the memory of Alexander the Great, even though the Ptolemies themselves had legitimised their own claims to rule by harking back to the image of Alexander.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, the Achaemenid past too continued to have significance in the Roman context. Roman writers were well aware of the possibility of equating contemporary Parthia with ancient Persia, even going so far as to interchange 'Parthians' with 'Persians' and 'Medes' in literary contexts. More generally, the entire discourse of 'good' versus 'bad' rulership as evolved in the Roman world of the late Republic and Principate was bound up with the interpretation of monarchical exempla. Hence, of course, in the Plutarchian essay, *De Fortuna vel Virtute Alexandri Magni*, Alexander the Great is set up as the model ruler, the bringer of civilisation (in the form of civic life) to the grateful peoples of 'barbarian' Asia. At the other extreme is the so-called 'Stoic' Alexander, the bloodthirsty tyrant depicted in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* as a 'comet of disaster for

<sup>91</sup> Translation: Graves 1957.

<sup>92</sup> See (once more) e.g. Smith 1988; Stewart 1993.

humanity'.<sup>93</sup> Arrian holds to a middle ground, reluctantly conceding: 'I agree that Alexander was carried away into imitation of Median and Persian opulence and of the custom of barbarian kings not to countenance equality with subjects in their daily lives.'<sup>94</sup> In Arrian's comments can be seen a further significant 'anti-type' for Roman imperial ideology to react to; the idea of the 'oriental despot'. Our second epigraph to this section illustrates the continuing significance of the rhetoric of 'Persian decadence' even in the Rome of the late Republic. The 'invention of the oriental' and the opposition of East and West as culturally and politically polarised identities is probably largely an ideological construct of fifth- and fourth-century Greece, particularly Athens; but this Greek mentality is later put to serve Roman purposes, and is visible in Roman depictions both of Hellenistic monarchy and of post-Hellenistic dynasties.<sup>95</sup> The opposition is even put to work in reinterpreting the past, with the 'feminisation' of the pre-Hellenistic dynasties of the East in Roman-era literature one notable example.<sup>96</sup> Similar discourses, purporting to depict Achaemenid and pre-Achaemenid kingship in Asia, are visible as early as fourth-century Greece.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the ideological programme of Antiochus I of Commagene seems to have been designed to straddle this dividing-line between East and West, with his claimed descent from both Alexander and Darius. So, while for Rome, Achaemenid Persia represented a model of 'otherness', 'orientality' and despotism to be avoided, in the Near East, the Persian inheritance continued to dominate discourses about legitimacy, rising to new prominence as the power of Sassanid Persia grew in the third century AD. In both Roman and Parthian worlds, in important but contrasting ways, Achaemenid Persia continued to determine the royal agenda. Little further justification is required for taking our story back to Cyrus.

We have set out the rough temporal limits within which this volume is meant to operate. One last function of our work is to examine the 'limits of kingship' as a political structure. One might well ask how far the very concept is translatable between cultures. It hardly needs stating that any given monarchy as a social structure is only fully intelligible within its particular social environment. As we hope we have shown, parallels between monarchical societies can be instructive, especially when those societies are interlinked, and the monarchies in question are shaping their public image by conscious engagement with each other. In any

<sup>93</sup> Lucan 10.35-6: *sidus iniquum gentibus*. Cf. Julian, *Caesars*, 316B; 322-325C, and see Bosworth 1996, ch. 1, for valuable reflections on the human cost of Alexander's activities.

<sup>94</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.7.4.

<sup>95</sup> On the classical Greek background, see Hall 1989. On Roman depictions of and reactions to Hellenistic monarchy, see once again (e.g.) Rawson 1975, Smith 1988, chs. 13-14, and Gisborne in this volume. On Roman representations of eastern monarchies, in particular Parthia, see (e.g.) Schneider 1998; Fowler herein. Of course, the modern debate is necessarily shaped by Said 1978 and the numerous responses to it. A proper survey of the discourse of 'Orientalism' and the ways in which it has been applied to the Ancient World is well beyond the scope of this volume.

<sup>96</sup> Gambato 2000.

<sup>97</sup> See e.g. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987.

event, we are not attempting here a taxonomy of kingship in all its forms, but a history of the presentation of certain kinds of claim to rule.

Kingship may not be an absolute, but rather a relative state. In a recent article, Fergus Millar raised the point that numerous peoples very clearly within the Roman empire were in fact ruled by 'client kings', and thus subject to a kind of 'two-level sovereignty'. In these circumstances they owed their loyalty not only to a local king, but also to a 'distant superior monarch in Rome'.<sup>98</sup> This situation was not unusual in the ancient world. Indeed, parallels could be garnered from the Seleucid and Achaemenid realms. One example, in fact from the Assyrian empire and probably dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, is provided by the bilingual inscription from Tell Fekheriye on the upper reaches of the Khabur river.<sup>99</sup> The inscription is carved on a statue, and describes it as a dedication to the god Hadad by a local Aramaean potentate, Hadad-yis'i. In the Akkadian (Assyrian) version of the inscription, Hadad-yis'i is described as 'governor' (*šaknu*); in the Aramaic version, he is called *mlk*, 'king'. The implication is clear; for official Assyrian purposes, Hadad-yis'i was a provincial governor, while to his Aramaic-speaking subjects he was a king.

It is clearly possible to be a king without being a 'sovereign', in the sense used by modern political theory.<sup>100</sup> Equally clearly, it is possible to appropriate monarchical symbols but make no claim to be a king oneself, or at any rate only make such a claim in particular contexts. Thus Roman Republican generals from T. Quinctius Flaminius onwards might do the sort of things that Hellenistic kings did. How far this constituted a claim to 'kingship', either within the Greek East or in the Roman world as a whole, remains a contested problem (explored by Gisborne). Again, the kinds of claim being advanced by kings to divine association or favour might make their role appear to shade over into that of priest or prophet. Hence arises the phenomenon of priest-kings; the meaning, even the usefulness of this term has remained an area of lively controversy to students of Near Eastern history (discussed by Kaizer).

Certain societies, of course, make a virtue of not having monarchies. In Rome, the ideology of the Republic set great store by subordinating, embarrassing, even humiliating kings. Thus in the pages of Polybius we are treated to the spectacle of King Prusias of Bithynia supplicating the senate wearing the freed slave's skull-cap and describing himself as 'the freedman of the Romans'.<sup>101</sup> Again, we see Roman generals going out of their way to indicate their superiority to kings, as in the case of Popilius Laenas, whose peremptory orders so shocked and embarrassed the Seleucid Antiochus IV in Egypt.<sup>102</sup> Julius Caesar, offered the royal title, could refuse with the magnificent line,

<sup>98</sup> Millar 1996, 159.

<sup>99</sup> See Kuhrt 1995, 397-8; Abou-Assaf et al. 1982.

<sup>100</sup> On the meaning of 'sovereignty' in an ancient context, see Davies 1994.

<sup>101</sup> Polybius 30.18.

<sup>102</sup> Polybius 29.27.

simultaneously humble, arrogant, and a pun: 'I am not King but Caesar'.<sup>103</sup> Most remarkably, the emperor Augustus could develop a public image based entirely on the forceful rejection of any implication of monarchy. He was not king, not Romulus, indeed wielded no more *potestas* than any other man might in the restored Roman Republic.<sup>104</sup> It is one of the ironies of history that this assertively non-monarchical public persona in fact heralded, in the Roman Principate, the most spectacularly enduring reshaping of the royal image, which can only be truly said to have ended with the collapse of the very last, tenuously Roman 'successor' dynasties after the First World War: the ending of Ottoman and Habsburg rule, the abdication of the Kaiser and the murder of Tsar Nicholas II. Indeed, the Augustan tradition may be said to continue in the person of Queen Elizabeth II, who claims descent through the Saxon kings of England to the *duces* of the late-Roman West.<sup>105</sup> But this, of course, is another story.

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<sup>103</sup> Rawson 1975; for the quotation, see Suetonius, *lul.* 79.2: '... quamquam et plebei regem salutanti Caesarem se, non regem esse responderit ...'

<sup>104</sup> *Res Gestae* 34.3.

<sup>105</sup> Some Anglo-Saxon kings made even bolder claims: see e.g. Newton 1992, 69, drawing attention to the presence of 'Caser' (i.e. 'Caesar') alongside 'Woden', no less, in Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies.

## LE ROI IMAGINAIRE: AN AUDIENCE WITH THE ACHAEMENID KING.\*

[The king] himself, so it is said, established himself at Susa or Ecbatana, invisible to all, dwelling in a wonderful palace... many gateways one after the other, and porches many stades apart from one another, were secured by bronze doors...<sup>1</sup>

The portrait of the invisible king in the pseudo-Aristotelian *de Mundo* is intended to evoke the structure of the divine world. It expands on a preoccupation in Greek sources with the inaccessibility of the worldly Oriental ruler, attributed to elaborate court protocol and the necessity of security.<sup>2</sup> In specific contexts, regal remoteness is often a negative trait, used to denigrate pretenders or decadent incumbents; it can both enhance ostensibly sociable competitors and measure the status of petitioners and their intermediaries.<sup>3</sup> Royal inaccessibility or seclusion derives some of its impact from a contrasting ideal of direct encounters with the king. This ideal finds visual and textual definition in the scene of a royal audience.

An encounter with the Great King is a significant theme in narratives about the Achaemenid court in Greek and Biblical literature, but it is most clearly articulated in images showing the enthroned king with attendants and approaching figures. The most elaborate surviving formulation of this was at the royal capital of Persepolis, where early in the fifth century, two large stone reliefs showing an archetypal king and heir fronted the double staircases leading up to the massive audience hall begun by Darius I.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between iconographic impressions of the audience to the setting and procedure of actual ceremonies is difficult to establish. Our surviving evidence testifies largely to a corona of presentation and perception. This article will focus on the visual dissemination of the idea of access and communication in the audience scene; the wider context provided by parallel literary evidence could expand our interpretation of how these scenes were viewed.

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<sup>1</sup> Arist. [*Mund.*] 348a.

<sup>2</sup> Hdt. 1.99, behind the battlements of early Ecbatana '...the king should be seen by none'. Herodotus also plays on the selective visibility of Smerdis and Darius I. On writing as a tool of this invisibility and the contrasting visibility of subjects, see Steiner 1994, p.131-2.

<sup>3</sup> Thuc.1.130, on the Persian pretensions of Pausanias; Xen. *Ages.* 9.1-2, Agesilaus is visible and open in contrast to 'the Persian'; Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.19-20, the public told to choose favoured intermediaries from Cyrus' guard (surrounding a visible but inaccessible Cyrus).

<sup>4</sup> For their place in the original apadana façade, see Root 1979, fig.11.